

MINUTES OF THE
SYBIL BRAND COMMISSION FOR INSTITUTIONAL INSPECTIONS
QUARTERLY ROUNDTABLE MEETING
JANUARY 26, 2005

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Montano called the meeting to order at 10:13 a.m.

OPENING CEREMONIES

Chair Montano led the pledge of allegiance followed by a moment of silence.

ATTENDANCE

Present:

Chair Eleanor R. Montano
Vice Chair Helen H. Stathatos
Frank Bacio
Vito Cannella
John Hammargren
Carl Moore

Others Present

Rex White, Regional Adm., DCFS
Carla Carr, Auditor-Controller
Ombudsman
Kathy New, Probation
B. Eugene Romig, Commission
Services
Sherry Scates, Commission Staff

Absent

James Cragin
Michael Russell

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JANUARY 19, 2005

On motion of Commissioner Hammargren, seconded by Commissioner Moore and unanimously carried, the meeting minutes of January 19, 2005, were approved as submitted. Commissioners thanked Sherry Scates, Commission Staff, for the excellent minutes she consistently produces.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Montano held her report for the Roundtable discussion. Due to the unsatisfactory conditions noted during the Commission's recent inspections, Staff was instructed to request a fiscal audit of the following homes: Tana Group Home #1/Normandie; Tana Group Home #2/Arlington; and the Westside Children's Group Home #2/89th Street.

TREASURER'S REPORT

There was none.

STAFF REPORT

Sherry Scates, Commission Staff, reported on the following:

- The LAC Fire Department confirmed that if quick-release bars are installed on windows, they must be operable; there are no exceptions; and
- The letter to the Board of Supervisors regarding the Aviva Conference has been submitted.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was none.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

All participants contributed valuable input, shared their respective experiences and brought the benefit of their expertise to a Roundtable discussion regarding the regulations and the monitoring of group/foster homes and their residents prior to giving individual reports.

Sheriff's Department: No representative in attendance

Probation Department: Kathy New, Probation, gave a brief overview of the new Outcomes and Measures Assessment that her Department is developing for Group Homes.

Chair Montano advised that over the last eight (8) months the Commission has been asking representatives from DCFS and Probation for the following information with no response:

- An updated Group Homes Directory;
- The current Group Home Reference Manual;
- A Do Not Refer/Do Not Use List;

- The number of homes closed over the last five (5) years;
- An update on Commissioner Cannella's Barber Training Proposal;
- The status of pepper spray use by deputies/staff at the Challenger Memorial Youth Camp in Lancaster; and
- A copy of Probation's Monthly Incident Report

Ms. New advised that she was unfamiliar with some of these issues, however, she will follow up and report back.

Dept. of Children and Family Services: Rex White, Regional Administrator, DCFS, advised that his Department wants to take full advantage of the independent and objective services the Commission provides, which he feels will ultimately improve the quality of care for children. Mr. White briefly reported on the following:

- In the past, a group of 30 to 40 County Social Workers (CSW) investigated reports of child abuse in out-of-home care facilities; however, a recent administrative decision (effective 03/01/05) was made to reassign those CSW's to case work to better serve the Department's core functions. The investigative duties will then be assigned to 25 field representatives who are specifically trained in immediate/emergency response issues and in the use of a Structured Decision Mechanism tool, which helps to determine the safety and risk to the minors. Working closely with state agencies and an improved tracking database should improve the quality of care and safety for children in group homes and foster care;
- Mr. White invited Commissioners to attend a DCFS Division Managers' meeting and present the Commission's inspection findings, discuss the Commission's possible increased involvement, including oversight of group/foster homes' educational component or participate in informal contractual hearings (with the approval from County Counsel). Chair Montano advised that meeting with department managers was the intent of the Quarterly Roundtable meetings, however, their participation has been non-responsive or minimal at best; and
- Sometimes a CSW is faced with a choice between a home that is providing quality care for a child but is in need of improvements or a home that is clean and orderly but may neglect the needs of the child; ultimately, the safety and emotional well being of the child is paramount.

Mr. White agreed to forward further information regarding the Division Managers' meeting schedule to Commission Staff.

Vice Chair Stathatos asked where after hours/emergency placement children are taken now that Maclaren Hall is closed. Mr. White advised that in an emergency situation a child may be brought back to the office (if it is close by) while the search for appropriate placement is conducted or a phone search for placement may be done on location. Ms. New advised that the procedure is somewhat different for Probation juveniles because such emergency calls usually result because the juvenile has done something wrong and is taken into custody.

Auditor-Controller: Carla Carr, Children's Group Home Ombudsman, DCFS, briefly reviewed the group home audit process and advised that such audits will begin next month. Commission Staff was instructed to forward the Commission's requests for fiscal audits of DCFS/Probation facilities to Ms. Carr.

FACILITY/GROUP INSPECTION REPORTS

Pasadena Branch Court

Vice Chair Stathatos and Commissioner Cannella visited this facility on January 20th and gave a rating of **Satisfactory**. Areas of concern: Commissioners noted that a group of female detainees alleged that Twin Towers' deputies were extremely disrespectful and were non-responsive to a "button call"; that inmates were not allowed phone calls; and that an inmate fell from a top bunk and was not attended to for some time.

Florence Crittenton Center – 43#1

Vice Chair Stathatos and Commissioner Cannella visited this facility on January 24th and gave a rating of **Satisfactory** with no areas of concern observed or reported. Commissioners noted the following: the facility has included Mental Health Services; they envision extending their Foster Family Program to include high school day students; prefer juvenile placements to be of a six (6) month duration to ensure effectiveness; and are working with the "Federal Fund Waiver" to include not only detaining the residents, but to also include "Preventative Services" with corresponding payment for services.

Moore's Cottage – 70#1

Vice Chair Stathatos and Commissioner Cannella visited this facility on January 24th and found no one at home; no inspection was conducted.

Optimist Boys' Home – 81#3

Commissioners Bacio and Moore visited this facility on January 20th and gave a rating of **Satisfactory** with no areas of concern observed or reported. Commissioners noted that facility vehicles are inspected by the California Highway Patrol.

P & J Children's' Foundation – 83#2

Commissioners Bacio and Moore visited this facility on January 25th and found no one at home; no inspection was conducted.

Edelman Children's Court

Chair Montano and Commissioner Hammargren visited this facility on January 21st and gave a rating of **Satisfactory** with no areas of concern observed or reported.

Affirmative Action Group Home – 1#1

Chair Montano and Commissioner Hammargren revisited this facility on January 24th and gave a rating of **Satisfactory**. Commissioners noted that the facility's interior has improved (i.e. fresh paint, new furniture, etc.) and that work on the roof and facility exterior will begin shortly.

NEW BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Montano distributed inspection assignments to Commissioners for the following week.

Commissioner Bacio gave a brief overview of the latest Hacienda – La Puente Community Advisory Committee Correctional Education meeting, which resulted in the merging of their Correctional Education Program with the La Puente Adult School. Commissioner Bacio noted that he and several other Committee members expressed concern that this would be detrimental to the Correctional Education Program and its unique educational needs.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was none.

MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA (To be presented and placed on a future agenda)

There were none.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Montano adjourned the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Scates
Commission Staff